



Indian Institute of Technology-Kharagpur

# Arousal control

*In sports*

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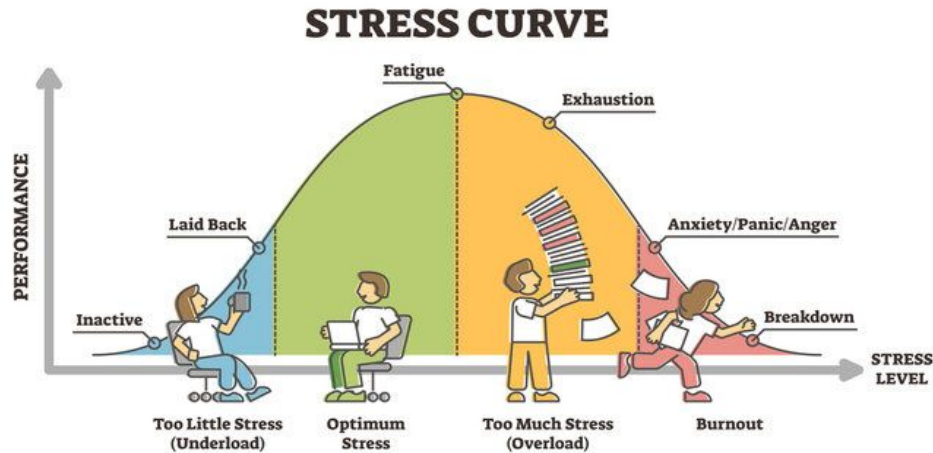




## Some clarifications...about stress in sports

- Stress is a core to some personalities (*pre-game jitters affect everyone*)
- Too much of load breaks us down (*it's the way you carry it*)
- Stress is only a mental phenomenon (*it affects physical status*)
- Some sports are more 'mental' than others (*all games require mental conditioning*)
- Entertainment has stress-buffering effect (*but also impairs the cognitive strategy*)





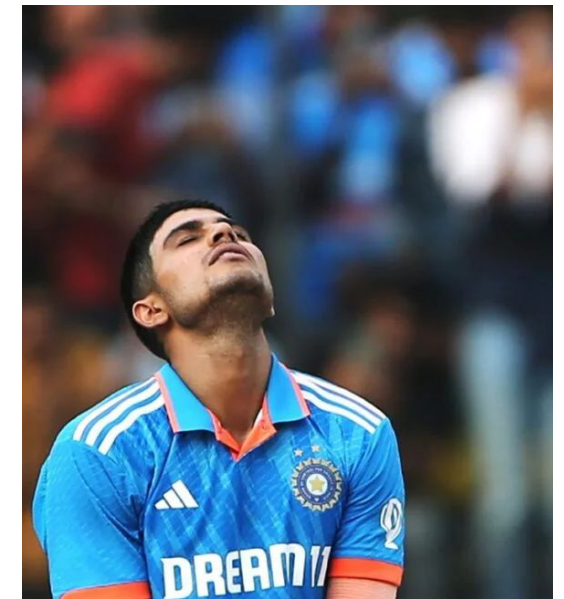
## What causes performance stress?

- **Blind ambition:** tendency to win at all costs, resulting in increased apprehension about outcome
- **Alienation:** pre-occupation with self & loss of belongingness in team
- **Faulty coping strategy:** lack of insight & flexibility about dealing with uncertain situations
- **Hypothetical missed opportunity:** lack of clarity about success & failure
- **Lack of resilience:** difficulty in 'bouncing back'



## Some clarifications...about stress

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- Too much load breaks us down (*it's the way you carry it*)



## Coping strategies...

- Problem focused (*seeking support, reducing negative thoughts with rational thinking*)
- Emotion focused (*justifies performance, blaming others, wishful thinking*)





# The greater the stress...

- ..., the greater the likelihood that a decision-maker will choose a risky alternative
- ..., the greater the tendency to make a premature choice of alternatives for a correct response
- ..., the less likely will be tolerance to "ambiguity"
- ..., the greater the distortion in perception of threat and poor judgment often occurs

*In stress, only immediate survival goals are considered, long-term goals are sacrificed*





# Coping strategies:

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- *'If you are anxious, you are not alone'*: Rest assured
- *'Look for support system'*: If you are overwhelmed
- *'Be optimistic'*: It may be a bad time but not a bad life
- *'Be resilient'*: Falling is no failure; not getting up surely is
- *'Focus on what you can control'*: Not possible to negotiate fate





# Managing stress...

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- Take personal responsibility for stress
- Reduce internal source of pressure: bad experience, negative self-talk, failure outcome
- Learn about coping style; more than lifestyle
- Exercise 'pattern breaking' when into a negative state
- Have plan 'B' for unexpected situation
- Accept what cannot be changed— not every stressful situation can be changed



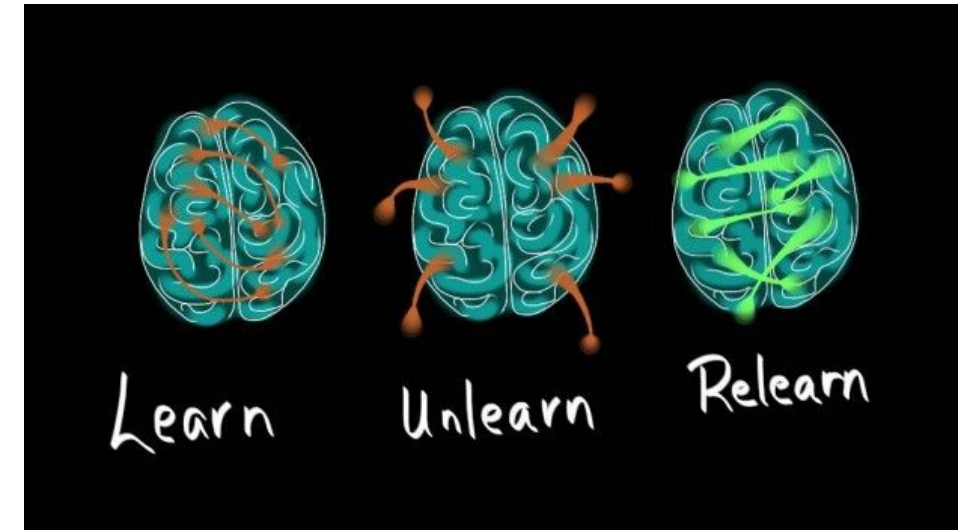




# Learning to unlearn...

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- All or none thinking fallacies trap us to no-win situation
- We neglect toolbox & try to change too much
- We underestimate the process; do not stick to pace
- We fear loss of identity loss while changing thoughts
- We suffer from optimism bias





# Managing the 'big day' stress

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- Recognize the symptoms being under pressure: butterfly in stomach, heartbeat, numbness
- Avoid external source of pressure: well-wishers, pep-talk, media, social media
- Reduce internal source of pressure: bad experience, negative self-talk, failure outcome
- Reframe pressure: connecting physical symptom with positive outcome gives rise to determinism
- Have plan 'B' for unexpected situation





# Managing Cumulative Stress

- Take personal responsibility for stress
- Accept what cannot be changed— not every stressful situation can be changed
- Avoid overwork— learn to share
- Be realistic about goals; one can only accomplish so much within a limited time-frame
- Learn about coping style; more than lifestyle
- Exercise self-discipline; in out-of-control situations
- Learn 'pattern breaking' when into a negative state



## Managing daily stress...

- Avoid self-medication
- Maintain sleep – wakefulness cycle
- Perform deep breathing exercise, deep muscle relaxation
- Establish realistic target, stop negative self talk
- Do not combat stress & do not give repetitive suggestions
- Manage time effectively & do not take big decision
- Practice mindfulness



Source: Getty image

## Some general guidelines - I

- Develop a strategy to think rationally  
*(...95% of our thoughts are repeats in the brain)*
- Handle 'daily hassles' at training sessions  
*(...do not allow these to cumulate)*
- Find a match between your ability & interest  
*(...sustain your interest privately)*
- Strike a balance of flexibility & discipline  
*(...set a priority line in training)*

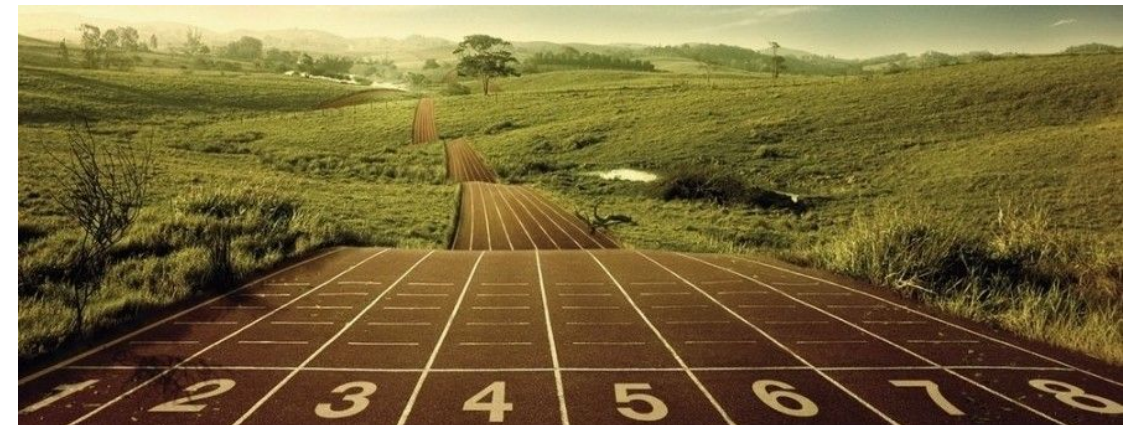






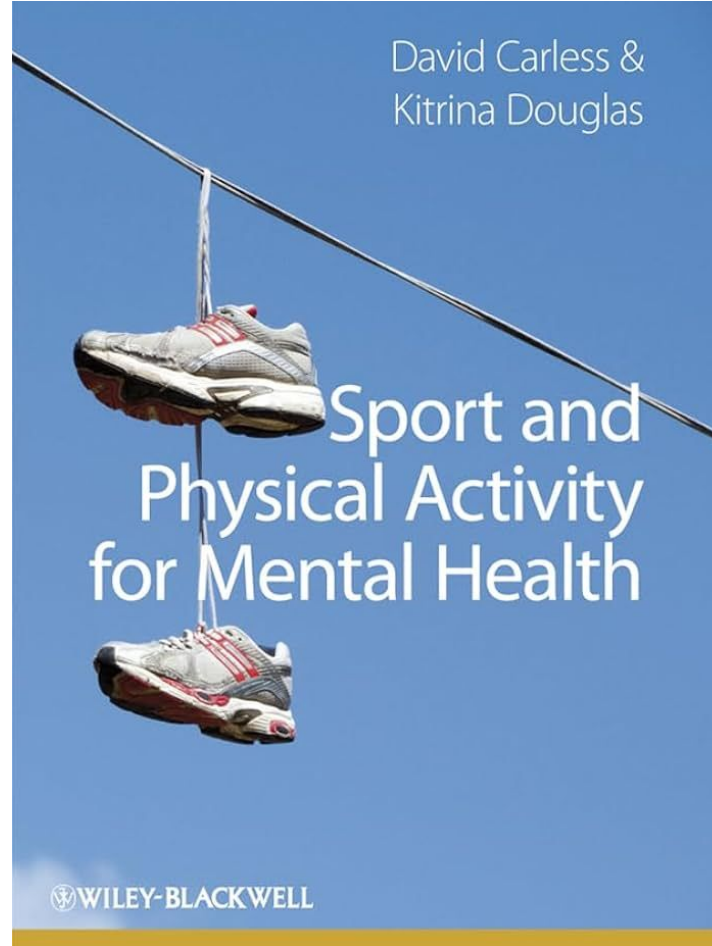
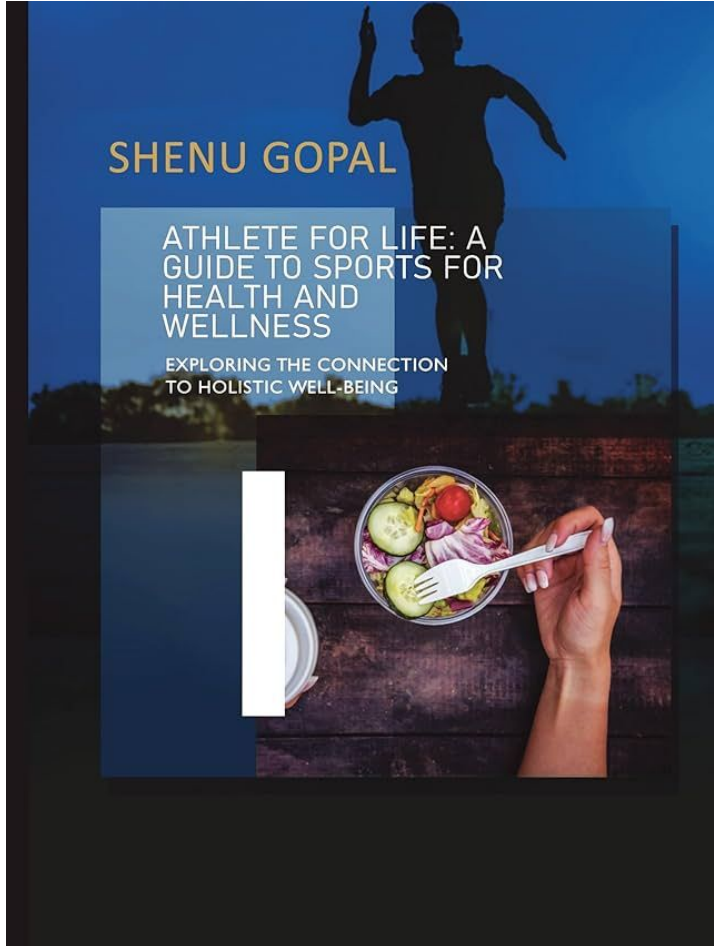
## Some general guidelines - II

- Manage uncertainty in everyday life  
*(...take decisions beyond outcome)*
- Go beyond short-term mission  
*(...long term vision is equally important)*
- Redefine 'success'  
*(...failure is not orthogonal to success)*
- Build your career beyond medal  
*(...but do not leave 'life' behind)*





# In sum...



- Stress affects everyone & impacts our quality of life
- Low tolerance to stressful situation results in poor decisions
- It is possible to unlearn stressful thinking fallacies
- Coping style is as important as lifestyle
- There are ways to manage stress



# Sports Mental Training Questionnaire (C. Pickering)

I can control my emotions when I am under pressure.	1	2	3	4	5
I use self-talk to improve my actions, focusing my attention on key-elements of performance (technique, tactics, body sensations, etc.).	1	2	3	4	5
I have a high level of self-confidence that makes me believe I can achieve anything I put my mind to.	1	2	3	4	5
I understand and follow the rules established in training.	1	2	3	4	5
When I am under pressure during a competition I'm able to relax physically and mentally, so that I am ready to perform.	1	2	3	4	5
I use self-talk to help myself overcome difficult times.	1	2	3	4	5
I am able to "bounce back" and overcome any failure. It does not discourage me from further action.	1	2	3	4	5
During a competition I am able to adapt quickly to changes in performance demands and to distracting factors.	1	2	3	4	5
During preparation for the competition I create real and accurate "inner films," planning possible obstacles and feeling sensations associated with the actual situation to come.	1	2	3	4	5
I know my own value, my strengths and weaknesses, and I plan how to improve them.	1	2	3	4	5



# Sports Mental Training Questionnaire

I accept my role in the group, and I see it clearly.

Whenever I lose myself-control during a competition, I can regain control of my own actions in the right moment.

I talk to myself to regulate my own thoughts, emotions and arousal.

I have an unshakable belief in my athleticability.

I understand my role, and the role of others on my team and how it all fits into the greater system

I can relax, and reduce my arousal level during competition if thesituation requires so.

I use mental imagery to control my own emotions.

I am able to communicate effectively with my team, and staff during the competition.

I am able to concentrate my attention on my performance andmaintain it during it's duration, and in case of any disruption, I can quickly refocus

Before the start of competition I visualizemy performance going exactly the way I want it to look like during the real competition.

Good luck...

